

24/A *Theatrum* 5
A
PROPOSAL

For the better

REGULATION

OF THE

STAGE.

WITH SOME

REMARKS

ON THE

STATE of the THEATRE among
the Ancient *Greeks* and *Romans*.

L O N D O N :

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STATE OF THE THEATRE-BUILDING
the Ancient Greek and Roman

LONDON:

Printed by J. G. Smith, at the
Office of the Surveyor-General,
in the Strand.



B

TO THE
MANAGERS
OF BOTH
HOUSE S.

GENTLEMEN,

 IS a common Rule with
Authors to address their
Dedications only to Men
of Power, and Importance; and,
as the *Stage* is the Subject of the
following Effay, 'tis with the
greatest Propriety devoted to you:

A 2

You

DEDICATION.

You are the Ministry of *Apollo*; you deal out his Favours to whom, and in what Proportion you please. 'Tis no wonder then that your Eminency has pointed out my Duty, or that I pay my Compliments where such Authority might demand them; I hope 'tis a good Method to recommend my self to your Favour, and that you will smile upon an Author, who even runs the Risque of his Reputation, by his Zeal for your Praise. ----- My *Fellow Writers* will certainly sneer at my Conduct in this Particular, and invidiously insinuate that 'tis prostituting the Character. --- But no matter, my Discretion will atone for the Condescension: When they submit their Plays to your tremendous Censure, they'll be of another Opinion, and wish they had brib'd
your

DEDICATION.

your Indulgence the same Way. ---
'Tis a known Fact, that the *Devil*
is sometimes worship'd as a God;
and if Fear should be the real Motive,
we know he's delighted with
Mischiefs, and therefore 'tis good
to prevent it betimes. ---- I beg
Pardon, ---- I had almost forgot
this was a Dedication, and consequently
the Province of Panegyric only. ---
To praise a Man rightly,
is to give him such Accomplishments
as he is most fond of himself;
and I *must* endeavour to
make my Court accordingly.

ON this Maxim, Gentlemen, I
am very ready to allow you all the
good Qualities that *ought* to unite
in the Managers of the Stage. ---
To be sure you have the Learning
of the Scholar, and the Politeness
of the Gentleman; you
have studied all the Beauties of
the

DEDICATION.

the Ancients, and are familiar with the Graces of the Moderns: You have all the Genius that is necessary to form an Author, and the keen Penetration of an inexorable Critick; you comprehend the whole Plan of a Plot at one View, and slide mechanically into the full Force of Dialogue, and Conversation: 'Tis an easy Matter for you to determine a Writer's Merits in a Moment, and bespeak the Fate of a Play at a single Reading.-- In short, you are the only Men in *Great Britain* qualified for the Employment, and therefore, I must freely own, 'tis absurdly romantic to dream of a Change.

You see, Gentlemen, I cannot be your Enemy, because I give this publick Testimony of
your

DEDICATION.

your Deserts, and suit my Opinion exactly to *your own*; I do this too without ever receiving any Favours from you, and even without expecting any.-----

Shew me any of your modern *Dedicators* besides who can say the same!----- I wish, with all my Soul, that I could persuade the Publick to think as we do, and be as free to confess, what so many have the Assurance to deny.----- But who is able to remove Prejudice? I don't in the least question but these Sons of Envy will ascribe even my Impartiality to the usual Current of a Dedication, or read it, like a *Hebrew* Book, the backward Way.----- I hope, Gentlemen, I shall not be charg'd with their Perverseness.---- I draw my Picture agreeable to the *Mode* on such
Occa-

DEDICATION.

Occasions: If it is not like, I am ready to confess my self a bad Painter, but I hope no Body will presume to condemn the *Original*.

I am, with the highest Admiration!

Gentlemen,

Your most Obedient, and

Most humble Servant.





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A

PROPOSAL

For the better

REGULATION

OF THE

STAGE.



I

Make no Apology for presuming to write on this Subject, even at this Time of Day; when the Stage has been so long enslav'd under the Tyranny of Players, and one of the Junto is honour'd with the Laurel to make his Royalty compleat. 'Tis an Essay that has long been wanted, and Poets,

B who

who have been the most injur'd, have had the least Courage to complain: Reduc'd, by their ill Fortune, to a precarious Dependence on the Stage for Bread, they have trembled to do themselves Justice, for fear their Lords should resent the Freedom, and damn their next Performance without allowing it the Favour of a Reading. — I am as liable as any to the same Fate, but despise the Apprehension; I am above being aw'd by their mock Terrors, and am fully convinc'd they are as imaginary Criticks off the Stage as they are Emperors on. In their Buskins the Poet has supplied them with Sentiments to support their Characters, and, in their Capacity of Agents to *Apollo*, they had need petition for the same Favour; to be condemn'd, at such a Tribunal, would give me so little Pain, that I would not make use of a single Plea to avoid it. This Indifference was the Advice of a *Nobleman*, famous for his Wit and Politeness, to a young Author; for, said he, *if you don't keep the Scene in such perpetual Hurry that they mayn't have Leisure to think, they'll sleep as you read, and damn your Play for putting them out of their Road.* Without any Hope of their Smiles then,

then, or Dread of their Displeasure, I venture to undertake this Cause, to give a true Picture of the present State of the Stage, and the Conduct of the Managers, the Dependency of Authors, and the Insults, and Hardships, they are liable to. I venture to appeal to the Publick for Justice to the one, and Mercy to the other, and am confident 'twill not be in vain. — I take it for granted those Gentlemen will not be at all alarm'd at this Attempt to attack them in their strong Hold; they have too good an Opinion of themselves, and think too contemptuously of their Adversaries to feel any Pain on the Occasion; they are not only in Possession but have Wit to defend it, and Interest to support it; the whole collected Body of Writers, poor Wretches! have not so much of either: Perhaps the *Laureat* himself will arise in Anger, with all the Merit of *Cæsar in Egypt*, and *Love in a Riddle*, to render him formidable; will draw forth his Pen and put them to confusion at once: If the *Laureat* will condescend so low, I promise, like *Abdiel* in *Milton*, when he challenged the *Devil*, to meet him half way, and be ready to make good my Charge, when-

ever he thinks fit to make a Defence.—If he would first enquire who I am that make so free with a Man of his Importance? I shall be as ready to reply as he to ask, and flatter my self he will have no Reason to be ashamed of his Adversary.—If I conceal my Name now, 'tis not because I am afraid to declare it, but because I would not be censur'd for undertaking what my Genius may be unequal to; for making my self an Advocate for others, when I stand in need of one for myself. — Should I be pardon'd for the Attempt, because every Body else declin'd it; should I be consider'd, like the *Shepherd David* attacking this great *Goliath*, when the Men of War trembled at Distance; should I meet with any Degree of Encouragement, or Favour, the *Laureat* should immediately know his Enemy, and be convinc'd that he is only so with Regard to the present Conduct of the Stage, and brings no personal Accusation against him whatever.

THERE has been a continual War for Time immemorial between the Poets and the Players; one has the Power of committing Hostilities daily, the other seldom or never; the Players have the

the actual Sovereignty in their own Hands, the Poets only the Title, and 'tis easy to guess which will be the most formidable Enemy. — Interest only can be the Foundation of this Struggle, because there can be no Rivalship in Merit, or Reputation : As 'tis the Labours of the Poets that maintain the Actor, and the Theatre together, and consequently they have abundantly the best Claim to the Profits that arise from them ; 'tis no Wonder that every Poet should feel himself an Enemy to that Management which is built upon his Ruin : But what Motive can the Players have to insult the Author they are to live by ? None but the inbred Hatred that the Usurper always bears to the true Heir, and the Fear that they will one Day or other exert themselves to take Possession of their Right. — I think there can be no other Reason assign'd for that Haughtiness, that Contempt, that Insolence which Poets are now-a-days treated with ; for 'tis natural to believe that otherwise they would at least be consider'd as Gentlemen, and be us'd with common Good-Manners: Whether I am right, or no in my Conjecture, nothing is more frequent than to have
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an Author, and a Footman respected alike, and I could quote numberless living Instances to prove it ; but, to avoid Particularities, I'll transcribe a Passage or two from the History of *Gil-Blas*, that are so similar to our Case, one would almost think 'twas a Copy ; the Difference of Countries being the only Distinction. — “ Our Foot-boy (says “ *Gil-Blas*) came, and told my Mistress “ (*an Actress*) out aloud, that a Man, “ with foul Linen, dirty Shoes, and who, “ saving her Presence, look'd like a “ Poet, demanded to speak with her. “ Shew him in, replied *Arsenia* ! Don't “ stir Gentlemen ; 'tis only our Author. “ So it was indeed, and one that had a “ Play in the House. He brought my “ Mistress her Part. His Name was “ *Pedro de Moya* : When he enter'd the “ Room, he made five or six low Bows “ to the Company, who took no manner of Notice of him ; only *Arsenia* “ nodded her Head a little, in Return “ for the Compliments with which “ he overwhelm'd her. He drew “ nearer to them, trembling, and in “ the utmost Confusion : He let fall “ his Hat and Gloves, took them up, “ and approach'd my Mistress, to “ whom

" whom he presented his Part, with
 " more Respect than a Lawyer gives a
 " Petition to a Judge. Be pleas'd to
 " accept Madam, says he, the Part I
 " presume to offer you. She took it af-
 " ter a cold, and scornful Manner, and
 " did not so much as condescend to
 " answer his Compliments. This did
 " not discourage our Author, who took
 " hold of the Occasion to give another
 " Part to *Rosinario*, and another to *Flo-*
 " *rimonda* who treated him no more
 " civilly than *Arsenia* had done. On
 " the contrary ; the Players, as obliging
 " as these Gentlemen naturally are, in-
 " sulted him with the most picquant
 " Raillery. *Pedro de Moya* was sensible
 " of it, but durst not retort *for fear his*
 " *Play should suffer*. He retir'd with-
 " out saying a Word to them in An-
 " swer, but I could perceive was mighti-
 " ly concern'd at the Reception he had
 " met with.—Methinks, says *Florimon-*
 " *da*, Signior *Pedro de Moya* did not go
 " away very well fatisfied.—Don't let
 " that trouble you Madam, cries *Rosinario*,
 " *Are Authors worth minding?* If we
 " suffer'd them to be equal with us it
 " would spoil them. I know these poor
 " Creatures ; I know them full well :
 " They

“ They will presently forget themselves
 “ in the least Encouragement. Use
 “ them like Slaves and don’t be afraid
 “ of tiring out their Patience. *It is*
 “ *enough for them that we’ll deign to*
 “ *act their Plays, &c.*” — This is a lively
 Picture of the Usage that Poets receive,
 when they make Applications to the Theatre,
 and a sufficient Reason for complaining of
 the Management, that lays it down as a first
 Principle to treat them with Rudeness, and
 Insolence. ----
 ’Twould be happy were this the only
 Grievance; the Sting of a Nettle is felt
 but for a Moment and forgot: But there
 are others of far greater Importance;
 and among the First of these is the
 Mortification of submitting their Works
 to the arbitrary Sentence of ignorant
 Pretenders. — I would not be so severe
 in my Censure, if numberless Instances
 were not at Hand to confirm it; or if
 ’twas not almost manifest in the Nature
 of Things, that Judgment, and such as
 These have little, or no Acquaintance. ---
 The *Player*, who is *most* conversant with
 the Stage, fixes his whole Attention on
 the mechanical Part of a Play, and, if
 there is Hurry, Perplexity, and Intrigue
 sufficient to keep him in a Flutter thro’
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the Whole, he is satisfied, and the Performance is exalted as the only Miracle among the Moderns: — On the other Hand, if the Tale is simple, natural, and uniform, it clashes with their sickly Tastes, and is condemn'd without Mercy. 'Twas happy for *Terence* that he was not to be tried by such Judges, 'tis yet happy for his Remains that they are secure from such a Trial: For, if they were not, the Applause of eighteen hundred Years would plead for them in vain. Another Reason to support the Charge is, That there is a little, petulant Vanity in them to appear personally great, or agreeable in the Characters they represent on the Stage; a certain Fondness to be the Life, and Spirit of the Play, and, 'tis in this View, they avowedly consider every Piece that is brought before them. If all the considerable Events don't depend on them, if the Business is equally divided, and other Characters trespass on theirs, 'tis an Error not to be forgiven, and the only Standard of their Judgment is against you; by which Means the whole must be sacrificed to a Part, and you must break in upon the Symmetry and Beauty of your Design, that they may appear

as pretty Fellows as they take it for granted they are.—As if, in the Furniture of a Room, the fair Lady, who possess'd it, should range the Glasses in such a Manner, as only to reflect her own sweet Person, and shew her Charms in every Attitude for the Entertainment of her Company. — Besides, by a long Familiarity with a Succession of Authors, by the Happiness of surviving the oldest and best, and as long an Indulgence from the Town in general, they arm themselves with a Prejudice against every new Beginner, and take it for granted that his Muse can never produce any Thing worthy of their Notice or Encouragement: Hence, without using as much Interest with the *Great*, as would procure a Provision for Life, you are not so sure even of a Reading, as a Condemnation.

IN the present Circumstances, therefore, he that has the most Friends will always have the most Success, independent of Genius, and Merit; and I would advise every Author to sue for a COMMAND from *above*, before he ventures to present his Play, for fear of a Denial without it.—This is the Reason why many tolerable first Plays have never seen
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the Light, and many others, which have been introduced with the greatest Pomp and Ostentation, have only seen it, and then disappeared for ever. — In short, as they openly disavow all the Elements of Criticism, and make their own narrow Capacities the Touch-stone of Excellency, 'tis no wonder they're so often mistaken, and the Town so often disappointed. — Give me leave to transcribe another humourous Passage from *Gil-Blas*; 'twill save me from mentioning other more recent Examples, that could not have been more effectual Demonstration. — “ I took it for granted, “ says he, that they (the Players) understood Plays, as Jewellers do Diamonds. Nevertheless, *Don Pedro de Moya's* Play had a great Run, tho' they did not think it would have taken. However, I could not suspect their Judgments; I had rather conclude that the Publick wanted common Sense, than question the Infallibility of the Company. But I was assur'd by every one, that the Plays, which the Players thought best of, had generally the worst Success; and, on the contrary, those they disliked were almost always receiv'd with Applause.

“ pause. They told me they hardly e-
 “ ver hit right, and gave me Instances
 “ of a thousand Plays which succeeded
 “ quite contrary to their Decisions.—
 “ I shall never forget what happen’d one
 “ Day at the acting of a new Play. The
 “ Players thought it dull, and tedious,
 “ nay they imagin’d the Audience would
 “ not hear it out: But they would ven-
 “ ture, and play’d the first Act, which
 “ was clapp’d, and the Second more
 “ than the First. What a Devil, says
 “ *Rosnario* this Play takes! They then
 “ play’d the third Act, which pleas’d
 “ more than the two former. I can’t
 “ comprehend it, says *Ricardo*, we con-
 “ cluded this Play would be damn’d;
 “ and see how ’tis lik’d!—Gentlemen,
 “ cries a Player that was by, with great
 “ Plainness, there are a thousand witty
 “ Strokes in it, *which we did not ob-*
 “ *serve*, and that’s the Reason of its
 “ Taking.”

BUT I don’t design a mere Invective
 against Players; ’tis hardly worth while,
 and I have touch’d on it farther in the
 ensuing Sheets. I shall make a few Re-
 marks on the State of the Theatre, a-
 mong the ancient *Greeks* and *Romans*,
 as well as the modern *French*, to inforce
 its

its Dignity, and Importance from their Example, and justify the Scheme that I have ventur'd to recommend to the Publick.

As soon as *Æschylus* had reform'd, and *Sophocles* perfected *Tragedy* at *Athens*, that noble, and elegant People were immediately convinc'd of its Beauty, and Advantage, and made it the publick Concern to support it; 'tis said they spent more Money in the Decorations of their Stage, than in all their *Persian* Wars, nay the Fund appropriated to that Use, was esteem'd so sacred, that *Demosthenes*, with all his Eloquence, was hardly able to alienate it for the Defence of *Greece* against *Philip* of *Macedon*. Neither was Comedy altogether neglected, for when *Epicharmus* had purg'd it from its original Rudeness, and Obscurity, the Magistrates likewise took it into their Considerations, thought it might be of use to the Publick, and gave the State the Management of it for that Purpose.—Thus both Comedy and Tragedy were incorporated under the Care of the Legislature it self, and an Officer stil'd the *Choragus* was appointed to keep them under such Regulations, as would be most serviceable to

to the People. Neither was the Office esteem'd unworthy of the noblest *Athenian*; for, among the foremost of them, we read the Name of the great *Themistocles*, and his Example would surely keep any Modern in Countenance, who should be heroic enough to follow it. — In this Manner flourish'd the Stage of *Athens* at the Expence of the Publick, and under the Direction of the State; and, 'tis to this generous Encouragement of Arts and Learning, their Country ow'd its Politeness, and their Poets their Immortality; they wrote with Spirit because they knew who they were to entertain, and what was their Reward.

“ Had their Stage, says a modern Author, been in the Hands of private Persons, and mercenary Players, ignorant of its Beauties and Defects, and whose Thoughts reach no farther than what they are us'd to; which, turning to a tolerable Advantage to their Pockets, they believe there is no greater Perfection. But *Athens* was too wise, too polite a State to let that fade, and remain useless in the Hands of the Ignorant, which, by the Care of the Wise and Knowing, might be turn'd to the public Advantage, and Glory.

IN *Rome* 'twas near four Hundred Years before they had any Stage at all, and then 'twas made a Kind of religious Ceremony by Way of Propitiation for a Plague. The Actors were Strangers to, and sent for from *Etruria* on this Occasion ; for which Reason the *Romans* had them but in little Esteem, and their Performances were too rude, and inelegant to merit any more. — But, some Years after, one *Livius Andronicus* a *Greek* added a Fable to their Songs, and reduc'd their *Drama* to something of Regularity and Order : Hence, by Degrees, it grew nearer Perfection, and at length, was taken under the Protection of the State ; the *Edile* was appointed, like the *Choragus* of *Athens*, to be their Director, and the Charge was defray'd by the Republick : *Agrippa* and *Cornelius Tacitus* were sometime *Ediles*, and presided in that Station in *Rome*, as *Themistocles* had done at *Athens*. 'Tis to this Notice, this Encouragement we owe a *Plautus*, and a *Terence*, 'twas the State form'd the Genius, and the Genius immortaliz'd the State : The *Roman* Authors remain, when the *Roman* Empire is departed ; they remain at once the Monuments of their own Glory, and
our

our Shame who are so little able to imitate them.

EVEN in *France* it self, beneath the Eye of Tyranny, and under the Hand of Oppression, the Stage has flourished, and been brought to greater Simplicity and Beauty than any other among the Moderns. *Lewis* the Fourteenth was a Prince of too much Penetration not to see its Excellencies and Advantages; he took it into his own Hands, made himself Proprietor and Patron, appointed Officers to regulate both Poets, and Players, and kept them both independent of each other.—

IN *England*.—But I'll now proceed to prove, in the Words of the before-mentioned Author, “ that the only Way
“ to make the Stage flourish, is to put
“ it into the Hands of the Magistrate,
“ and in the Management of Men of
“ Genius and Learning; which would
“ once again bring that admirable Art
“ to its antient Perfection.”

To inform the politer Part of Mankind of the Use, and Importance of the *Stage*, may be thought Impertinence, and Presumption: But to remind them of it is certainly most just and necessary: It seems of late to be esteem'd hardly
worthy

worthy of their Notice, and Encouragement, and never was improv'd and supported, among us, as it deserv'd. For this Reason we shall endeavour to prevail with the Publick, to allow a short Review of the Advantages that attend it, to recommend it more effectually to those who are convinc'd already, and to excite a like Approbation in others, who either wilfully shut their Eyes on Demonstration, or thro' Indolence have neglected to inform themselves better. —

Our Scheme would not answer our End, if the World was not satisfied it was just, and such a Review will at once render it undeniable.

THE Design of the *Drama* is to hold a Looking-Glass to Life, to reflect the true Image of Men's Minds, their Beauties, and Deformities; to soften the Rigors of Morality, and give a Smile to the Face of Virtue; to blend the Reasonings of Philosophy, with the Negligence of Entertainment, and add the Charms of the Graces to the Dignity of the Muses: *Wisdom* wears the Masque of Pleasure, and lures the Audience unawares into an Admiration of her Precepts: *Tragedy*, and *Comedy* may be said to be the Daughters of *Pallas*, and *Jove*,

D

who

who are station'd on Earth to give us an Idea of Divinity, and prove that Knowledge and Happiness are as nearly allied, as Passion, and Repentance. — One presents us with Objects of Pity and Aversion, the other diverts us with Images of Folly, and Contempt; *Tragedy* accustoms the Mind to Benevolence, and Humanity, *Comedy* quickens the Apprehension in exposing Immorality and Vice; *Tragedy* imbodyes Argument with a Tale, and makes us wiser by a Survey of Misfortune, *Comedy* displays the Picture of familiar Life, and laughs us into Reformation; *Tragedy* talks to the Soul, and *Comedy* to the Sense; one is the Inspirer of virtuous Melancholy, the other the Director of reasonable Mirth; *Tragedy* is the Lesson of uncommon Adversity, *Comedy* the Dictate of vulgar Events; *Tragedy* is the Tutor to the Mind, and *Comedy* to the Manners: Both are calculated essentially for our Advantage, and are capable of all the Instruction that is to be found in the severer Maxims of dry Philosophers. — Heedless Creatures, who could never be fix'd by the one, come with Pleasure to the other, and find such Follies expos'd there, as they know to be their own, tho' they

they were ignorant of them before; acquire such Knowledge as they would never have stumbled on any other Way, and learn such Behaviour as blots out their former Indiscretions.--- Such is the Force of Dramatical Representations, and such the Value of the Stage; so wide, so extensive is its Influence, so general its Entertainment; 'tis certainly the School of Wisdom, the Friend to Humanity, and the Parent of Politeness!

IN this View, as we before observ'd, the wise and accomplish'd People of *Athens* consider'd it; in this View they made it the Care of their Legislature, and encourag'd it with all the Sanctions of Authority and Reputation; this gave that Grandeur, that Simplicity, that Majesty, which has distinguished their Stage from all others; this made a POET a reputable Name, spirited his Labours, exerted his Genius, and stamp'd on his Works the Seal of Immortality.--What was worthy the Regard of their Government, may justly claim the Protection of any other, and 'tis greatly to be wonder'd that we have never been emulous of so great an Example, and trod in the same Path to Wisdom and Glory: We have

abundantly more need of it than they; our Educations are infinitely worse, and nothing but the Stage can make amends for the Deficiency; what we want may very easily be supplied there, and, when we see the Original is Virtue, we shall be sure to make it our Example.—This is the Occasion of the present Scheme; 'tis address'd to the Publick, as having a natural Right to its Protection, as standing greatly in need of that Protection; as a great, and popular Design that will bestow Reputation on the Power that supports it, and do Service to the People for whose Benefit it was calculated.—We are in Hopes it will receive a suitable Encouragement from the first, as we are sure it will not fail of the sincerest Approbation from the last.—It has long been a general Complaint that the *Stage*, and Dramatical Writers have languish'd, alike, for Amendment, and Reward; this Branch of Learning, indeed is the only one unprovided for; *Religion*, *Law*, *Physick*, *Mathematicks*, *Painting*, and *Musick*, have all their stated Provisions, or what is equivalent, for the Support of their Professors; nay, even the Breed of *Running Horses* is encouraged with an annual Bounty of Fifteen

teen Hundred Guineas, while the Reward of *Poetry* is confin'd only to the *Bays*, and that is possess'd by a *Player*, who has made Oath at the *Chancery Bar*, that his Employment was a very ample Provision before, even 1500*l. per Annum*, if our Intelligence may be depended on. — So desperate is the Circumstance of a Writer for the Stage, and so little is he regarded; tho' 'tis the Business of his whole Life to be instrumental to the Pleasure, and Improvement of Mankind.

BUT so far have we been from following the Example of *Athens* in the Support and Honour of the Stage, that we have suffered it to be conducted at Random, by any who had Interest enough to procure themselves a *Patent*, without any Regard to their Merit, or Qualifications.--Hence the Players themselves, who, in many Respects, are absolutely unfit for so important a Trust, became the Heads of Dramatical Learning, and dol'd out what Pittance of Entertainment they thought fit to all the polite World; hence the Current of Wit took what Channel they were pleas'd to allow it, and hence, from a large and capacious Tide, 'tis contracted to a Rivulet

vulet without a Name, and in a very little Time, without an Alteration of Conduct, like *Euphrates*, 'twill be swallowed up in Sand. — Can it be suppos'd that Persons of little or no Education, who even commenc'd *Players* thro' Wantonness, Indolence, or Necessity, who cultivate their Memories so much, and regard their Reason so little, who consider Acting as a Trade, and Dramatical Writings their Tools; can it be suppos'd that such Persons are proper to be made Judges of the politest Learning, or qualified to give their Royal Authority to Wit, before it can be made current, or allowed to pass? Is it fit that such Persons should be the Licencers of the Stage, or that the Stage should be loaded with an Incumbrance, where it should expect nothing but Liberty, and Advantage? Is there any Justice or Decorum in permitting such Persons to give Laws to the Publick, and prescribe the Diversions of the Age? Is it reasonable that Poets should be more apprehensive of such Persons, than of a whole Audience? Not that they prefer their Sense, Judgment, Knowledge, Experience, or Delicacy; but because they want a sufficient Quantity of either:
Because

Because they are Strangers to the Generosity and Tenderneſs of common Readers; becauſe they may be froward, out of Humour, ſleepy, prejudic'd, or capricious, and condemn in an Hour what coſt them a Year, or more, of infinite Pains and Labour; becauſe they think themſelves ſuperior to any Authors now in Being, indulge an habitual Contempt for them, and expect nothing from them that is worthy their Notice.-- Now is it poſſible that ſuch Perſons who avowedly make Intereſt their firſt Motive of managing the Stage, who make Buſineſs the Standard of their Judgment, and Pride the Meaſure of their Behaviour; is it poſſible that ſuch Perſons ſhould be acquainted with the generous Views, and noble Principles on which the Stage is founded? ſhould encourage the Wiſdom and Philoſophy, Wit, and Humour 'tis ſo manifeſtly calculated to improve? ſhould be fond of a beautiful Moral, or ſtruck with elevated Reaſon and Sentiment? — No; theſe Queſtions are in vain: Experience proves the contrary, and the Stage is *manag'd* into an abſolute Oppoſition to them all. — No Body will wonder now that Farce, and Pantomimes have taken Place

Place of *Shakespear*, and *Otway*; or that the Players have destroy'd the Taste they did not understand; no Body will wonder that they treat Authors as if they had no claim to good Manners, or did not understand it, or did not expect it, or 'twas not due from a *Player*.—— No Body will wonder that the *Managers* should condemn a Play publicly while it was acting with Applause, in Affront to the Author, and the Audience in general; or impose their own uninform'd Conceptions on the World, and insolently resent their Condemnation. — No Body will wonder that Acting itself is so little improv'd, or that the Stage is in Danger of sinking for want of Performers. — If a young Player betrays any Genius, or deserves any Degree of Applause, 'tis owing to himself only, and not to any Care, or Encouragement of theirs; on the contrary, if any such has appear'd at any Time, it has been their Business to mortify, and distress him down to the Level of the Rest; for fear he should become too powerful a Rival, and claim a Share of the *Management*, that, as Affairs are, was due to his Merit. —— 'Tis certain that good Acting is absolutely necessary, and
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essential to the Stage; and therefore ought to be improv'd to as much Perfection as possible: 'Tis an Art that consists in Imitation of Nature, as well as Writing, with this Difference, that the Sentiment of the Poet directs, and circumscribes the Execution of the Player, and the Poet is directed and circumscrib'd himself by Nature only. — A good Player is as necessary to the Dramatick Writer as good Language, and Energy of Expression; and, on the other Hand, a Player without the Writer is a Page of Blank-Paper, only a Vehicle to Thought, and of no Importance till animated with the Soul, and Genius of Poetry. — 'Tis therefore absolutely necessary that every Performer on the Stage, should be regularly educated to his Business, and instructed in all the Parts of Nature, Passion, Life, Action, Sentiment, and Character that are essential to his Qualification. He should be vers'd in History, a Critick in Statuary, and Painting, a Master of his Countenance, and able to imitate every Feature of the Person he is to represent. — No Actor can make any Figure without these Advantages; and, with them, he may not only excel on

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the Stage, but recommend himself most effectually in private Life, and wear off by Degrees all the unhappy Prejudices that are now intail'd upon the Profession. A new *Roscus* or another *Betterton* may arise to support the declining Stage, give a new Spirit to Dramatical Entertainments, and set his Contemporaries an Example every way worthy of their Imitation. — This will make Part of the ensuing Scheme, and, tho' 'tis anticipated here, 'tis only to premise that, tho' we are unwilling to allow *Players* the Management of the Theatre, we are abundantly inclin'd to consult their Interest and Reputation, by all other Means; to bring them forward to the Eye of the Publick in the most amiable Light that is agreeable to their Station, and secure to them every Privilege which is any Way consistent with the Benefit of the Whole, and their particular Advantage.

Good Players, 'tis evident, are hardly to be expected under the present Management; or, at least, those of Genius will not be improv'd so much as they would under any other, that should be founded on better Principles.--- There is as little Reason to believe Authors

thors will excel under the same Tyranny, and Oppression, or exert themselves with any Spirit, when, with Merit, or without, with Interest, or with none, they are sure of Ill-treatment, whenever they make their Applications to the Stage. Which of all the present Writers is sure of having his Play represented, when 'tis finish'd, without the most vexatious Delays, and the most tedious Attendance? Which of them is secure from the Managers trifling Criticisms, and unmannerly Objections? Which of their Plays has not been cut and mangled by them, like poor *Deiphobus* in *Virgil*, till the Parent could not distinguish one original Feature of his Off-spring? These magisterial Censors pertly insinuating that, like the Bear's Cub, it was hardly form'd, till they had lick'd it into Shape.--- By which Means every Man's better Taste and Judgment is debauch'd to theirs, and he becomes accountable to the Publick for all the Errors, and Absurdities they have intruded upon him, as well as his own.---Wretched Servility! when a Man of Delicacy and Spirit, must submit so meanly to the Censure he despises, or languish away his Life in Want and Obscurity without it. —

If Authors have any Plea to be heard, this Injustice calls aloud for Regulation; if not, let Oppression continue, till, by a Length of Misfortune, the very Character is lost to Mankind, and no one for the future will sacrifice his private Peace to the Publick, that so intirely disregards him. — If any one should object that, in former Times, the Circumstance of Poets was exactly the same as 'tis at present, and yet they wrote with a Spirit greatly superior; 'tis easy to recollect that the first Part of the Supposition is groundless; the Managers were not then so great, neither were Authors so little; he who wrote for the Stage was sure to be respected there, and, by his own Credit, could at once secure the Performance of his Labours, and preserve them from the Torture that has been the Fate of all his Successors.

NOTHING has been more complain'd of than the Licencing of the Press, and nothing has been more contended for, by all Parties, than the Delivery of it from that Incumbrance: These Gentlemen hang the same dead Weight upon the Stage, and play the *Licencers* even without an Act of Parliament to give

give them Authority.—Without their *Imprimatur*, no Play can dare to make its Appearance, and we think there is as little Reason for tolerating this Badge of Servility as any other.—Why should Poets be the only Slaves in the Community, or why should Dramatical Entertainments be liable to the Shackles that every other Branch of Science is deliver'd from.—Beside, nothing is more common than for the Managers to complain of the Difficulties they meet with in the Discharge of their censorial Characters, of the Envy they raise, of the Enemies they make, and the Resentments they occasion.—If they are serious in these Complaints, we should think 'twould be Prudence to avoid them ; this Scheme will ease them of the Burthen at once, will disincumber them from the Weight of publick Cares, and reduce them to the humble Quietness of their Brethren.—We flatter ourselves they will esteem it an Obligation, that we have interpos'd for their Deliverance. Like *Sylla*, they may lay down the Dictatorship, and retire in Safety, and like him they will appear abundantly more great in the Resignation, than the Exercise of their Authority.

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'Tis plain then the Management of the Stage is by no Means fit for the Players, and consequently 'tis necessary to chuse some other.—We don't mean the present Managers should be disposs'd of the Patent they have so lately procur'd; or that Mr. *Lun* should not proceed with his new Project in *Covent-Garden* for the Advancement of *Harlequinery*: No, our Design does not at all interfere with theirs, nor is intended to invade their boasted Property.—'Tis to build a *new Theatre* on a quite different Establishment, and with a quite different View; theirs is confin'd to their own Advantage, this is calculated for the Good of the Publick, for the Encouragement of Learning, the Improvement of Politeness, and the Honour of the Age.—On these Principles, 'tis easy to be observ'd that our Design is quite different from theirs, and consequently bids fair to be encourag'd accordingly.—But the Question is, who shall put it in Execution? We have already determin'd *Players* to be incapable, and all the World will be convinc'd that *Authors* are so too; their united Fortunes would hardly be able to effect it, and, if they could, they are too much Parties in the Affair
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to be trusted with what depends upon Unanimity, Regularity and Order : When Poets or Players should ingross it to themselves, there will always be Complaints of all Sides, and perhaps with Reason : Both these therefore must be set aside in favour of disinterested, and impartial Persons ; such are Men of Quality, and Figure, Taste, and Fortune ; such only are fit to be at the Head of the Stage, and dictate to the Pleasures of an elegant, and understanding People : To them therefore we apply to redress the Grievances of the Stage, and prevent them for the future ; to take the Cause of Learning and Virtue into their Protection, and encourage both by their Example ; they have the Means in their own Hands, and may execute it at Pleasure ; they have Knowledge, Judgment, Importance, Impartiality, and every Requisite for so amiable a Trust : To them therefore this Application is made with all Justice, and Propriety ; the Poet, the Player, the Spectator desire their Interposition for the common Advantage, and the Interest of the Stage demands it : 'Tis to be presum'd they have too much Generosity to decline what is become so necessary, and would prove
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of so much Advantage. 'Tis an Offer absolutely worthy of their Acceptance, and the Lovers of Musick have already shewn them the Way: Surely the *British Theatre* is as worthy of Notice, as the *Italian Song*, and needs their Encouragement a great deal more.—The *Athenians*, it may again be remembred, made their Stage the Care of the Government itself; and surely the *Athenians* had not a single Virtue that would not become a *Briton* as well; we would have no Difference but in the Name; if there is any, let it be made to our Advantage.

To build a new Theatre, and furnish it with Dresses, Scenes, and whatever is convenient or Magnificent, will require a Sum of 10, or 12000*l.* or more perhaps; as shall be judg'd necessary on a more regular Estimate. — Such a Sum can only be rais'd by Subscription, and the Rich and Great have it always in their Power to effect it: To them therefore, on that Account, this Scheme is peculiarly directed, and their Interests are consulted in it, as well as their Reputation.—'Tis propos'd therefore that this Money should be rais'd by Subscription; the Capital to be divided into an hundred, or more Shares, and the
Encouragers

Encouragers to subscribe for as many, or as few as they please; the Property of the House, Stock, &c. to be vested in the Subscribers, and the Management confin'd to a *Committee*, chosen from among them, to prevent the Confusion of Numbers, and Variety of Opinions: This Committee to be annually chosen by the Majority of Votes, in the Manner of Ballot; every Share intitled to a Vote, and a President to be elected to preserve Order, and regulate the whole. All Plays shall be submitted to their Censure, all Authors abide by their Determination, and all Players be subservient to their Instructions: In short, all Affairs of Importance shall be directed by them, and the rest, to excuse them from needless Trouble, shall be executed by an *Officer*, appointed for that Purpose; and accountable to them for his Behaviour.

THIS *Committee* should be chosen out of the most accomplish'd of the Proprietors, that they may be effectually qualified to judge the real Merit of every Play, that was brought before them; that they might be sure to chuse the best; that they might observe its Defects before it came to Representation, and hint their Opinions of whatever

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might be added to increase its Beauties. — That they might distinguish most accurately the Merits of the Actors ; assign them those Parts that were best suited to their Capacities, and give them all the proper Encouragement they deserv'd.

'Tis easy to observe the Use and Influence of such a *Committee* as this ; they would not appear, like dull Dispatchers of Business, or petulant Pretenders to Knowledge, and Discernment ; they would be consider'd as the Deputies of the *Muses*, and would be venerated accordingly : Every Author would tremble to appear before such Judges, and would exert his utmost Genius for their Approbation ; he would write in the Supposition that every Line was to abide their Decision, and would make their Judgment the Test of all his Beauties ; he would polish over and over again, doubt, amend, improve, till he had a reasonable Hope of Success ; and after all, be afraid of the Severity he endeavour'd to please. This would effectually strangle every rude and unfinish'd Performance in the Birth, and save a Number of abortive Pieces from the Light they would be asham'd of, and dye

dye immediately to avoid. — This would be the Means of producing Pieces of Genius indeed; Pieces as much above the usual Spirit of Dramatical Writings, as the Conduct of this Theatre would be superiour to all others, as much as the Judgment of its *Directors* had the Advantage of the *Mercenaries* who had before usurp'd their Places. — Perhaps we might rival the Merits of our celebrated Forefathers; at least we should be nearer on a Level with them, and animate our Performances with a Spirit more like theirs; whatever ill-natur'd People may insinuate, 'tis not Genius that is wanting, but Encouragement, and some of our *first Plays* are undoubtedly equal to theirs: To write for the Stage is an arduous Undertaking, and no one can arise to Perfection at once; 'Tis like the Practice of Virtue, surrounded with Difficulties, and beset with Dangers; by Perseverance and Resolution only we shall conquer them at last, and Success is more than an equivalent for the Toil. — Let any one ask himself what is the Reason of that Terror, which he feels when his Labours are brought to the Test, and take their Fate from the Decision of the Audience? Separately,

ly, there is not one, who helps to compose it, would give him any Degree of that Tremulation and Anxiety which he experiences on the Occasion : No, 'tis the Recollection that he abides the full collected Force of their whole Genius, and Understanding ; he imagines all their Apprehensions, Notions, Learning, Judgment, Taste, Severity center'd in one Point, level'd at him, and declar'd in one Voice ; he compares himself, and his Performance with his Idea of this complicated Being, and owns himself too inconsiderable, too weak, too imperfect for the formidable Censure ; it falls with too great a Weight, and condemns without Appeal. — But, when every such Performance should be first submitted to the Examination of this amicable *Committee*, the Exertion of these congregated Qualities would be in its Favour : Faults would be detected while they might be reform'd ; Scenes would be improv'd, Conduct would be mended, Poetry enliven'd, and Morality elevated before it came to the Stage, and the Audience would sit only to be entertain'd in a more perfect, and sublime Manner, than ever they had known before. — Such an Examination would answer to
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the *antient Custom* of exposing Pictures, and Statues for the Approbation of the People, before they were allowed a Place in their Temples; that nothing but Beauty might be suffer'd to have a Chance for Eternity, or become the Characteristick of the Age: It would resemble the Practice of the *Philosophers*, who controverted their Doctrines most feverely among one another, before they ventur'd to make them publick, or expose them to the Consideration of Mankind.—It would habituate Men's Minds to Criticism of the noblest Kind, and give them a just, and familiar Insight into all the Beauties of such Entertainments.—The Piece that had the Sanction of such an Approbation, would be heard with holy Reverence, and profound Attention; Barbarism, and Indecorum would be banish'd from the *Theatre*, to the *Bear-Garden*, its proper Element! and neither Poet nor Player be apprehensive of inhumane, unmannerly Treatment, or the rash Sentence of Prejudice, and Ignorance: Decency, and Composure would add an Elegancy to a *British Audience* that they stand greatly in need of, and *Foreigners* should learn from us the Politeness which they boast
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to be peculiar to themselves. —
 The Delicacy of Mind, that proceeds from a true Taste, a refin'd Judgment, would become fashionable ; People of Figure would think Knowledge and Virtue their greatest Distinction, their highest Recommendation ; the Reputation of such Principles would become contagious, and universal good Sense distinguish the *British Nation*. — Thus, is this Scheme calculated for general Advantage, that the Publick may see themselves interested in the Execution, and inflame one another with a Zeal suitable to the Occasion ; no more Complaints could possibly arise of the Dulness, or Debauchery of the Stage, to excuse Men of Sense from attending it, or impel them to *Gaming*, or any other dangerous Amusement, in Exchange for a noble, and reasonable Entertainment.

THIS will be the Service resulting from this Scheme to the Publick. We come now to the particular Interest of the *Proprietors* ; for we would not ingage the Subscribers in any Undertaking of this Nature, without consulting their Profit, as well as their Reputation. — We have been inform'd the annual Gains of
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of a Stage, in Repute, amounted to above Three Thousand Pounds, one Year with the other; and we have a rational Hope of equal Encouragement, and Advantage; but, whatever is the Amount, the whole Sum shall be lodg'd under the *Managers Direction*, in a Treasurer's Hands appointed by them for that Purpose, whereby they become the Trustees for their own Money, and are sure of never being deceived. The Subscribers shall be allow'd Five *per Cent. Interest* for whatever they advance which shall be annex'd to the nightly Charge of the House, and order'd to be made the first Payment for ever.

BUT, as a much larger Sum will necessarily arise from this Scheme than will defray the Interest, and all the necessary Charges of the House, 'tis expedient to propose what Purposes it will most honourably, and consistently answer.—Here we flatter our selves that we pay a Compliment to our Patrons, in surmizing such a Method, as will make their Compliance the noblest Monuments of their Generosity that can be rais'd to their Memory, and the Means of effecting a more amiable, and more extensive Munificence, that any other Age,
or

or Nation can parallel. — The *Writers* of the *Drama*, were the first Persons who furnish'd the Means for putting this Scheme in Practice, and consequently they have the most just, and natural Right to the Profits that result from it; yet hitherto these Gentlemen have had no Share in it; but two, or three Players, over and above their Allowance as such, have divided between them, what would give a continual Support to a much greater Number of the others, who had so much the better Title to it. — Let it be agreed, therefore, that every *Dramatic Author* who writes for this Stage only with that Genius and Spirit, which will recommend his Play to the Approbation of the Town, be intitled to an annual Pension of one Hundred Pounds out of the Treasury; and, because the Design shall not be overloaded in the Beginning, let four new Plays only be acted the first Season; one before *Christmas*, and three after; this charges the Stock with but four Hundred Pounds, and, if four more new Authors should take Place the next, it increaseth to eight; if the third four more, twelve; and these will be sufficient to supply one House with a Succession of new Entertainments. —

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The Pension will inable them to go thro' their Studies with Ease, and Pleasure, and allow them sufficient Time to finish them to that Perfection, as will be worthy of such Encouragement, and such Approbation.—It mayn't be amiss neither, that such Gentlemen, as are thus devoted to the House, should be allowed Places in the *Committee*, at the Examination of any new Piece; that they all might have full Opportunity to make what Objections they think reasonable, and prevent any after Reflections on the Merits of their Contemporaries; to mortify that Spirit of Detraction which sometimes unhappily prevails among them, and cordially reconcile them to one another's Excellencies, by making them necessary to one another's Success.

THE particular Advantage, arising from this glorious Beneficence, will be this: No Man, of the least Genius, or Spirit, will ever present a new Play to either of the other Houses, till he has vainly attempted an Acceptance here; by which Means every Work, and Author of true Merit, will be wedded to the Interest of this House, and make it their Business to support it; the Town will be always sure of the best Entertainments

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here, and, wherever they are, the whole Tide of Credit, and Encouragement will certainly flow.

HERE it may be enquir'd, where will you supply your selves with Actors, as well as Authors? and one is necessary, as well as the other. — We answer, the Performers at both Houses are so oppress'd by the Tyranny of their Superiors, so circumscrib'd by mutual Combinations against them; sometimes so badly paid, and, at all Times, so arbitrarily treated, that we are perswaded they are ready for the Change, let it take Place when it will, and will rejoice at the Deliverance. — Beside, let it be made their Interest to desert their old Masters, and chuse themselves new; let them be treated with Gentleness, and Humanity; let them be rewarded with an Increase of Pay, according to their Merit, and let a standing, yearly Provision be made, for honorary Acknowledgments of peculiar Services. — On such Conditions, we are sure the most understanding, and meritorious among them will be proud to engage; and, particularly, when they change their Dependence, from an undistinguishing Management, to one whose first Principle

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is to regard every Man, in Proportion to his Genius and Behaviour.

BUT there is a Prospect of considerable farther Profits which are yet unprovided for. — Should the Scheme therefore answer agreeable to our Expectations, let it be resolv'd; That, when the Pensions are settled, and paid Year by Year, and all other incident Charges are defray'd, a certain Proportion of the remaining Sum be yearly left in the *Treasury*, or remov'd to the *Bank*, as a Deposit to answer the original Fund, and maintain the Foundation for ever. — The Rest may be employ'd in decorating the Theatre with all the Grandeur, and Magnificence it is capable of; in enlarging the List of Authors, or in annual Prizes to those who had best merited in their Endeavours, for the Entertainment of the Town. — There is no End in the Good it might be instrumental to, and we don't question but the noble Proprietors would employ it accordingly.

'Tis very visible that this great *Metropolis* can support two Theatres, beside the *Opera*, in all the Elegancy, and Expence of Entertainment; and, if both were render'd conformable to such a Scheme as this, we are convinc'd they

might answer all the Intents of an *Academy*, on the most Royal Foundation. They might be made the Support, the Credit, the Improvement of all Kinds of Dramatical Learning; the Amusements of the Publick would maintain every Species of Poetry in its highest Perfection, without any additional Charge to the Government, or the People.—This is the desirèable End we have in View, what we so heartily wish, and so warmly recommend; we publish the Design for general Approbation, and depend on the inborn, and ingenuous Disposition of our Countrymen for Success.

BUT, if the Stage was regulated by a disinterested, and impartial Management, a second Theatre would be superfluous, because there would be no injury to Authors to be complain'd of in this: Which is the chief Reason of supporting two, though the Expedient by no Means answers the Intention. By this, half the Expence of the Stage would be sav'd to the Publick, or they would be better inabled to support one, without the Risque of bad Plays, and thin Audiences.

WE don't insist on this as a perfect Scheme, for the Execution of so great

a Design ; 'tis meant only as a Hint of what great general Advantages would result from the Stage, under proper Management, and how much 'tis necessary to begin the Reformation : Whoever can add any Circumstance to improve it, is oblig'd in Honour to communicate ; 'tis a common Cause, and whoever refuses his Assistance, out of any mean, or fordid View, deserves the Censure of every Man of Generosity and Understanding. — 'Tis the peculiarly distinguishing Excellency of this Scheme, to be founded intirely on Principles of Beneficence, and Honour ; 'tis calculated for no mean, or mercenary Ends ; no private, or particular Interest is recommended in it ; 'tis all open, honest, and undesigning : The Encouragers will see at once from what Motives it rose, and what Purposes 'tis design'd to answer ; they will see the Quantity of Profit that is reserv'd for them, for the Cause of Learning, and the Publick in general ; they will see it breathes nothing but true Concern for the Benefit of Politeness, and is animated by the tenderest Regard for Humanity, and Virtue. — If there are any Strokes too severe on the *present Conduct* of the Theatre, they must

must be imputed to a long Series of Provocations, to successive Indignities to Authors in general, but in Resentment of no Man's particular Injury. — What is said on that Subject, is as much founded upon Truth, and Integrity, as any other Sentiment in this whole Essay. — The *Author* himself is thoroughly mortified and confounded, that so great a Design as this should pass thro' his Hands; he would have been abundantly better pleas'd if Persons of more Importance had undertaken it, and his Share had been no more than common Approbation of what is right: However, he affirms himself to be actuated with no corrupt, or sinister Views; he has contracted for no Authority, nor has insisted on any Reward; he submits his Claim, in common with his Contemporary Writers, and shall think it Honour enough to be plac'd on the same Level. His profound Regard for the Muses, solely inspir'd him with this Ambition for their Service; he thought himself oblig'd to attempt it, and hopes his Sincerity will atone for his Presumption. All Men should be serviceable in Life when 'tis in their Power; if this Proposal takes Place, he will be particularly
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happy in effecting his Wishes and his Duty together; if it does not, his Endeavour has not been wanting, and he must find his Satisfaction in the Tryal, tho' his Reward was Disappointment.—

Writers to the Stage, are a Set of Men who are at very great Pains to qualify themselves for the Service of the Publick, and study hard for its Approbation; but tho' Reputation is what they principally aim at; they have no Objection to a Support in the mean Time; this is not an Age for a philosophic Life, and an Angel in Poverty could not preserve himself from Contempt. — Beside, Necessity and Distress of any Kind are Enemies even to an Author's Reputation, and too frequently to his Virtue; such a Person is oblig'd to publish in haste, can't allow himself Time to consult his Genius, or deliberate with his Judgment; he is happy when his Work is finish'd, that he may have his Reward; or else he is oblig'd to flatter the Great for a Subsistence, and reduc'd to a State of Slavishness, and Dependence: The most odious and contemptible Circumstance, that can befall a generous Mind! — This gives Occasion to the frequent Complaints of crude, and un-

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nimated Performances ; this imposes them so frequently on the Publick, rebates Curiosity and Attention, and makes the Reader sick of Novelty : Hence, the truly perfect, and regular Performance meets with a cold and negligent Reception, in the Belief that 'tis a Monster of the same Breed, and consequently as little deserving Regard. Hence the greatest Genius generally owes his Success to a Hit of Circumstances concurring in his Favour, and hence the noblest Performance, has languish'd in Obscurity unknown, and unesteem'd. This gives Occasion to the continual Censure on *Poets*, that arraigns them of prostituting their Understandings, and belying other Mens Characters, at the Expence of their own ; this has subjected them to the Temptation, and compel'd them to a Compliance ; this has misled them from their better Disposition, and made that a Misfortune, which is so frequently called a Crime : Hence the Name of *Poet*, and *Flatterer* are commonly understood to be the same ; and hence that Character is sunk into Infamy, and Contempt, which us'd to bestow Honour, and Esteem on others.— Is it not then greatly meritorious

rious to be instrumental to the Reformation of the *Poet*, as well as the Stage? To give him an honourable Provision for the Sake of the Publick, in Exchange for the Wages of Falshood, and Ignominy? To inable him to write with Bravery, and Freedom, with Energy, and Purity, with Taste, and Correctness; to render his Life comfortable, and easy? To make him fond of the Publick, that takes such Care to distinguish him? To inspire an Emulation among Authors in general, to excel one another, for the Sake of true Glory, for the Sake of Virtue, and their Country? — Such would be the Consequences of this humane, this equitable Design; Learning, and the Publick would improve together; *Poets* would again be a Character of Knowledge, and Innocence, and general good Sense would prevail among the People: Truth and Sincerity would again be Virtues, and refin'd, and elevated Entertainments do Honour to the Stage.

AFTER what has been said, is there any farther Need of recommending this Scheme more particularly to the Great, the Noble, or the Polite? Which of them would refuse his Patronage to
H Humanity,

Humanity, Learning, Politeness, and good Sense? Which of them would declare open War with every Muse, and every Virtue? Which of them would avow his Fondness for Dulness, Barbarism, Injustice, and every Thing that is base, and unworthy? Which of them would profess himself an Enemy to the Society he belongs to, or venture on an Opposition that would be a Reproach to his Character? We will not imagine there are any such among the Nobility of *Britain*, and we presume no one will behave in Contradiction to such an Opinion. — Let it be consider'd, that the Patrons of this Proposal will add a real Honour, an additional Dignity to their former Accomplishments; they'll render every Grace and Virtue of their Lives more amiable, and bring all those Graces, and Virtues into Action together: They'll be the Founders of their own Applause, and live eternally respected in the Gratitude of future Ages, for the Benefits that resulted from them, and their Concern for Mankind. — The *Muses* would be all devoted to their Service, and fond of their Fame; they would be exalted like the *Genii* of their Country to dictate Wisdom to the World
below;

below ; they would be the *Guardian Angels* of Knowledge, and experience the divine Pleasure of seeing it flourish under their Protection, and Favour : We would advise a noble *Tablature* to be erected in the Manner of the Ancients, over the Portico to the intended Theatre, that should be inscrib'd to the RESTORERS OF LEARNING, and remain a Monument of their Munificence, while Sense and Knowledge had any Advocates, or one Writer had Gratitude to acknowledge his Patrons and Benefactors.

'TIS possible, after all, this Scheme, however generous, useful, and beneficent, may never take Place. — Persons of Fashion mayn't care to incumber themselves with any Thing that may interfere with their present Round of Life ; People in general may be contented with Dramatical Entertainments, such as they are, rather than be at the Trouble of a Reformation ; the present *Manager's* Interest may be too great for all the *Authors* in *England*, in a Body ; and *Authors* themselves may be thought too inconsiderable to deserve such a Turn in their Favour. — Perhaps there may be as much Truth, and Certainty

in these Objections, as in any one Proposition we have advanc'd thro' the whole.—But, if there should, the *Author* will more lament the Depravity of the Age in general, than his own private Misfortune ; he will satisfy himself in having exerted his Capacity to the contrary, in having given a Hint that may be useful to Posterity ; that, when Arts and Sciences shall revive, when it shall become honourable to profess them, and fashionable to encourage them, some such Scheme as this may take Place to improve the Stage, do Justice to Authors, advance Knowledge, and reflect a due Censure on their *Forefathers* ; who, having the same Opportunity, neglected it ; who, having the same Offer, despis'd it ; who prefer'd the *Player* to the *Poet* ; who permitted the Decay of Learning, tho' supplicated to prevent it, and satisfied themselves with Ease, and Indolence, in Lieu of Activity and Honour.





RECAPITULATION.

AS the Positions laid down in the preceding Scheme are pretty much mingled with Facts, and Reasonings that were necessary to support them, it may not be amiss to present the Reader with a short Review both of the Disease, and the Remedy; 'twill be reducing the Prospect of the whole within so narrow a Bound, that it may be seen at one Glance, and be comprehended the better.—The *present Management* of the Theatre is in the Hands of the *Players*, who are unqualified for it, by being such, and have justly forfeited it by arbitrary, and tyrannical Behaviour, by wrong Judgment, by ill Manners to Authors, and Insolence to the Town in general, by acting as *Licencers* to the Stage, by depressing the Genius both of Poet and
and

and Player together, and by engrossing the Profits that might be applied to much better Purposes. — A Proposal is made to remedy these Inconveniences; The Example of the antient *Greeks*, and *Romans*, as well as the modern *French* is recommended to inforce it, and the *English* Stage represented, as needing it more than either. — This Proposal is address'd to the Publick, and the Rich, and Great in particular; a *new Theatre* is prov'd the only proper Way to remedy the present Grievances of the Stage; 10, or 12000 *l.* necessary for that Use: Such a Sum can be rais'd only by Subscription: The Subscribers to be the *Proprietors* of the House, Stock, &c. as Trustees for their own Security; and to receive 5 *per Cent* Interest for their Money. The Subscription to be divided into an Hundred, or more Shares, and every Share entitled to a Vote, in the electing of Managers: The *Managers* to be a *Committee* annually chosen from among themselves, by Ballot, with a President, and a Sub-Officer to put their Orders in Execution. — The Use of this Committee, in the Influence it would naturally have on Authors, and Players, and the Improvement of the Taste in Town

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in general. — The clear Profits of the Stage to be applied to the Support of Authors, by an annual Pension to such who deserv'd it; to inable them to go thro' their Studies with Ease, and Honour; to encourage, and reward Players who had distinguish'd themselves by their Performances; to sink by Degrees, the original Fund, or erect a Bank for the Maintenance of the Stage for ever. — We have purposely omitted several Particulars that are of great Use in their Place, because we would make this Review as short as possible; and because we think it sufficient to prove that *the STAGE at present stands in need of a Reformation, and that this is the most probable Way to effect it.*

F I N I S.



in general. — The clear promise of the
State to be applied to the support of
Agriculture, by an annual pension to such
who devoted up to make them to go
into their studies with haste, and dis-
count to encourage, and reward those
who had distinguished themselves by their
performances; to that by the great
original fund, or endowment, for the
Maintenance of the State for ever.
We have purposely omitted several
things that are of great Use in their
place, because we would make this
Review as short as possible; and therefore
we think it sufficient to give a short
Sketch of what has been done, and of what
is to be done, and that is the end of the
first part of the work.



